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Chinese Oil Drillers Are Back in Russian Arctic

This is the third year in a row when the Chinese Nanhai-8 drilling rig has arrived in Russia's Murmansk for drilling in Arctic waters.

By The Barents Observer

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Rosmorport

The 15,469-ton installation earlier called "Nan Hai Ba Hao" has been discharged from a heavy-lift vessel Red Zed I and is now ready to start working in the Kola Bay.

According to the Russian port management authority Rosmorport, the operation was conducted on June 30 and included complicated navigational exercises.

The rig will be located in Murmansk, a port city in northwestern Russia, for 10 days before it is tugged toward drilling grounds in Arctic waters.

Currently, three powerful Norwegian tugboats are moored in the Kola Bay. The Sea Spear, Sea

Surfer and Siem Emerald vessels have been in the area for several days and might accompany the Nanhai-8 out at sea.

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There is no information on where the Nanhai-8 will drill this year, but it is expected somewhere in the Kara Sea.

The Chinese rig has made one of the biggest discoveries on the Russian Arctic shelf over the last years.

The rig first made it to the Arctic in 2017, when it drilled in the Leningradskoye gas field in the Kara Sea and expanded the resource potential by more than 850 million cubic meters of gas to a total of 1.9 trillion cubic meters. The next year, it came back in the area to drill in the nearby Kusanvoskoye field. Both operations were made in cooperation with Russia's natural gas company Gazprom.

In May Gazprom confirmed that the drilling at Rusanvoskoye revealed 390.2 billion cubic meters of gas. The discovery, named after Soviet Energy Minister Vasily Dinkov, is located at 72 degrees north, about 100 kilometers off the west coast of the Yamal Peninsula.

The Nanhai-8 was built in 1983. Now it sails under the flag of China as it is owned and managed by the China Oilfield Service Limited.

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